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Cree and Canada sign $1.4 Billion deal

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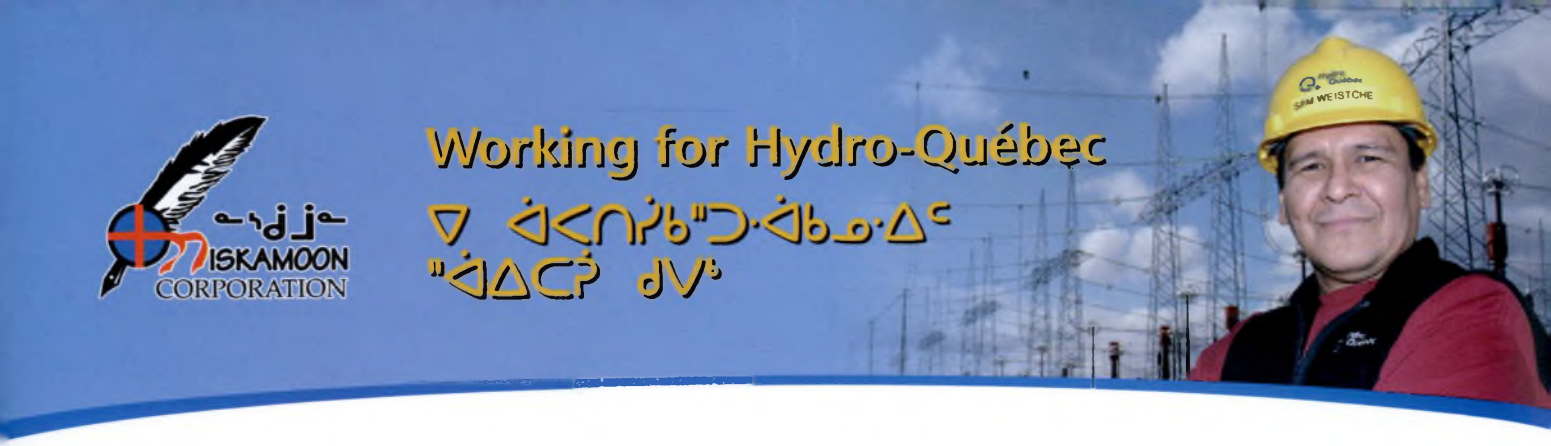

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Colonization to decolonization

by Will Nicholls

Most First Nations are intimately versed in the realities of colonization. The outcries we heard from many First Nations about Canada's refusal to sign the UN declaration of Indigenous Peoples seemed to be a continuation of the colonial roots of Canada. I have to admit that I am confused given the signing ceremony on February 26 in Mistissini.

In a few strokes of the pen the federal Conservative government righted a good portion of the wrongs of the past 20 some years concerning the Cree and the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

Not only that but it did so in a surprising manner. The Crees will get $1.4 billion out of the deal. It will not be doled out in small amounts each year but we will see the bulk of it in the form of $1.1 billion dropped into a Cree Trust bank account within "days" according to Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl.

This is the largest amount of money given at one time to any First Nation. It speaks volumes of the trust given to the Cree by the Canadian government to manage their own affairs. It speaks to being treated as equals in terms of governance. It shows an unexpected willingness on the part of the Conservative Party to right the wrongs of the past and create a true new relationship with the Cree.

As Grand Chief Matthew Mukash said, "We gather here in Mistissini to celebrate the progress represented by this Agreement, and to thank the government of Prime Minister Steven Harper, represented by the honorable Minister Chuck Strahl, for having the foresight to listen to our concerns and the courage to act on its commitments. After 33 years, because of the Harper government, Canada can finally say to the Cree People that it has been true to its word."

The Canadian government has had 33 years of having difficulties in being true to its word as we all know.

Indeed, our past history with the Canadian government should not be forgotten; however, now we can finally also look to the future. A future that while we remember the lessons we have learnt we should look to less conflict and more control over our destiny.

It is not to say that all the wrongs have been righted or the fight to have our rights recognized and respected is finished with. We still have more before us but a great deal has been accomplished in this decade. Though not all may agree with the Paix des Braves, it brought home a surer control of our future, as does this latest agreement. With each agreement the Cree have learnt much and it shows in the actions of our leaders and how they respond to the challenges put before them.

Mukash recognized those who went before him when he said, "Our Grand Chiefs, Billy Diamond, Ted Moses and Matthew Coon Come, and their councils, each in their own ways fought using the means provided within the laws of Canada and within international law, to gain the implementation of our treaty."

The lessons each have learnt has been passed down from Grand Chief to Grand Chief and we can see the results.

It is a long process but decolonization is an elusive goal as many First Nations know. It is, however, one that all First Nations endeavour to attain. Within this Agreement, the past agreements and those we hope to make, it seems more and more a possibility for the Cree Nation. Since 1975 the Crees have made great progress in decolonization and taking control of their destiny. The future holds great hope as long as we stay the course because the reality is that it all comes down to the Cree people and how they deal with what they want or need that future to be.

As Minister Strahl said, "I am convinced that reaching these agreements is the best way for federal, provincial, territorial and First Nation governments to ensure that we can all live together in an economically prosperous, culturally vibrant and environmentally sustainable country. Of course, much work remains to be done; many steps must be taken for us to reach this goal. But before we resume our efforts, let us acknowledge the significant strides we have made to arrive at where we are today. Let us honour those who have helped us along this path. Let us celebrate the birth of a new relationship."

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photo:
Will Nicholls

rez notes

Money reigns over me...

I watched the process of the residential school payments to the living survivors of the archaic education program called assimilation. The process was simple, give all native people the right to an education and sit back and watch the show. The problem was how to do it, en masse? Well, the government sure tried hard to educate people, no matter how. Out west, the farmer system was forced upon the Indian, who learned quickly but was always shunted out the final sale of their products. The same for the fur trade, but that required an intimate knowledge of nature, so the northern areas, only good for furs, remained generally untouched and out of reach to few, but prospectors and pilots, who's only goals were to get rich quick.

Once well established, the residential school operated for a century, before too much attention was focused on the many who learned school the hard way, the enforced way, the strict way, the way of the all boys school in Europe back then was similar, except perhaps that many were of privileged families with wealth and they got to see their parents every summer, Christmas, etc...

Since reconciliation of the government and the churches through the payment process for all who experienced that education have finally come to fruition, people have spent, spent and spent everything they got in a few short weeks or days for many. I read the papers and hear the news that some have come to tragic endings; some speculate that for the money they got became tempting to those who target the poor and impoverished.

Reading one ecclesiastical journal depicting the unfair financial practices of the most famous store in the north, the amounts just to cash cheques seemed immoral, so, I thought about how much that money was actually worth. An average check of 18,000.00 would cost about 2% or 360 big ones, just to cash or process. Some have convenience cards where their money could be held, of course, for a fee, another .05 % or so, nearly 9 loonies to use the card and a sum of $2.50 per cash payout thereafter, to a possible tune of $10.00 per day if you have a lot of moochers around or instant friends. Of course, in order to keep your money, you have to pay up your store debts to rid of the 25% interest rates, which for the average joe, equals five grand or more creating an average sum of $5,360.00 before even buying anything. I'm not including the lawyer's fees, I don't think I should make fun of them because they're lawyers, you know.

The big TVs and cars are tempting and paid for with the rest, given that there are no banks usually around to award you with at least an interest in return, but nyet, nyet, no interest for you from you know which giant retailer is everywhere north of fifty.

So, money is liquid, slipping quickly like the rain of moolah that came from political heaven, back into the hands of those who stand to benefit the most. For many who have good sense and judgment payments were good and fortuitous enough to maintain a level head and not go overboard with a money overdose.

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Canada

Eastmain Chief resigns

Reason why a mystery as former chief refuses comment

By Steve Bonspiel

In a strange twist to an increasingly bizarre story, Eastmain Chief Lloyd Mayappo has tendered his resignation after originally asking for Deputy Chief John Brown to quit after calling into question his conduct.

The January 23 meeting was called to "expose and explain" the situation of what some are calling a dysfunctional Eastmain Band Council.

The press release also called for either Brown's or Mayappo's resignation or both. The council had reached a deadlock and they were no longer able to be a functioning, productive council working for the people.

In a letter to Brown, Mayappo said that Brown was "getting bolder and louder all the time" and he could no longer work with him.

After two failed attempts at garnering enough constituents to participate in a binding election, the council had a meeting in late February to announce a vote, as per their right under the Cree-Naskapi Act.

"Fear-mongering has ruled as both sides have not been totally heard," said Brown. "I saw this whole situation as a complete disaster. I see it as a loss across the board."

Some community members had short memories as they blamed *the Nation* for the election being called, according to Brown.

"People saying that the last *Nation* article is the reason why this election is going through is absurd and ridiculous. The problem is what Chief Mayappo said at the meeting on January 23. His jumping to conclusions and not listening to his council is causing the problem," he said.

The crux of the dispute appears to be, at least partially, Brown's lack of knowledge of the Cree language and his mixed background.

Mayappo conducted the January 23 meeting in Cree and did not inform his Deputy what was said about him – a clear divide gone public.

Brown said that at the meeting of January 23 he was told, because he did not understand Mayappo because he spoke in Cree, that Mayappo was talking about resigning then. But he chose to stay on for another month.

"It was shocking to me," said Brown. "This is why there was a lot of employee frustration because he decided not to resign. It made for confusion as to who was in charge, who should they listen to at council? You can't make those statements and pretend like nothing happened and go on with business as usual."

Brown also said that Mayappo's February 19 letter of resignation stated that he wanted to resign on February 28. Brown surmises that he wanted to attend the signing ceremony in Mistissini of the $1.4 billion agreement with Ottawa.

Mayappo would not comment when he was reached at his home by telephone.

Councillor Daniel Mark-Stewart would not comment directly on Mayappo's resignation, but he did go as far as refusing to confirm when the chief resigned. He said that the story was reported even though the Elders did not want it to be in *the Nation*.

But Brown begged to differ.

"I don't think there was a vote at the meeting of not going to *the Nation*," he said. "This was one person's opinion."

Brown's sister Denise and her children were verbally attacked by Mayappo supporters after the story came out, adding to the sad state the recent political turmoil has caused.

"People may be reacting too far with regards to what they say to my sister or her family because of some of the things I might have said," said Brown.

"Whenever I express my opinion I try to at least give the reasoning for that opinion," he continued. "When you're open with your opinions like that you're going to be subjected to that type of thing no matter what."

Lloyd Mayappo

"Fear-mongering has ruled as both sides have not been totally heard. I saw this whole situation as a complete disaster. I see it as a loss across the board."

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Chisasibi mushrooms offer economic boost

Mushrooms worth millions on Asian market can be developed

By Steve Bonspiel

The Cree Nation is always looking for a way to bolster its economy and protect traditional territory at the same time. With a new pilot project currently in the development phase that would see trappers harvesting and selling mushrooms down south and abroad, it could soon be meshing both worlds together in perfect harmony.

Researchers from the Universities of Toronto and Laval with PhD's in Mycology visited Chisasibi traplines in September 2007 and found approximately 300 different species of mushrooms. Although most of them have no commercial value, at least a few, including the coveted Matsutake mushroom, are worth a lot of money.

Although Matsutake mushrooms are found in western Canada and parts of the U.S., Gilbert Hamel, a consultant for the pilot project, said that their taste is closer to those found in Japan.

"There are four or five edible mushrooms in the area," said Hamel, who works with the Chisasibi Business Service Centre (CBSC).

"The Matsutake alone could represent millions of dollars a season. When you have them shipped fresh, they are worth $250 a kilogram. When they're dried, they're worth $150-$200 a kilogram. We have a contact that needs five tons every year. It's a lot of money.

Eric House, CBSC General Manager, said that although it is possible that these mushrooms were used traditionally, that knowledge has not been passed down.

"We don't want it to be commercial first," said Hamel. "We want to gain the knowledge about the mushrooms, do science experiments with school groups and various other things. We are trying to get people interested in these mushrooms and non-timber products."

He also sees it as a way to protect traplines from unwanted incursions by non-Natives and over-zealous forestry companies.

Turtle mushroom

Matsutake or Pine mushroom

photos courtesy of Gilbert Hamel

Hamel and House are in the midst of setting up an as-yet-unnamed co-op with the Cox, Chiskamish and Nineoclock families as founding members. After that, he is hoping a large number of James Bay's 300 family traplines join in.

Tallymen would not be obligated to harvest their mushrooms by joining the co-op but they could stay for an undetermined amount of time in a state of "inventory" which would protect their land nonetheless.

Those who wish to partake in the project however, would have the option of "transferring" the mushrooms themselves, after learning how to do so from experts, or allowing others to do it for them and splitting the profits when they are sold.

The pilot project is being developed after the Chisasibi contingent was shut out of a similar Municipalité de la Baie James (MBJ) project, called Rural Laboratories. In it, researchers are given $100,000 a year for six years to study the different types of wild fungi that grow around trees.

Mushrooms are the fruit of a living organism called mycelium. Mycelium is a fungus which attaches itself to a tree's roots where they become inseparable. The mycelium provides the tree with water and nutrients and the tree, in turn, provides food for the mycelium.

Spruce bollet

Hamel talked about the dangers of non-Native researchers unfamiliar with Cree traplines surveying the mushrooms in the summer and fall.

"They go on the land and they don't know where to walk or step," said Hamel. "There are animal traps and in many cases they do a lot of damage to various aspects of plant and animal life on the land. We are trying to figure out a

continued on page 29

On February 21, 2008 the GCCEI signed an Agreement concerning a New Relationship with Canada. The Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Regional Authority would like to express its thanks to the people who have contributed to the New Relationship Agreement with Canada. On the federal side, we would like to thank Minister Strahl, Raymond Chrétien and the federal negotiating team. On the Cree side, we would like to thank all the Chiefs and Council/Board members for their ongoing guidance and efforts throughout the negotiation process. A special thanks also goes to Executive Director Bill Namagoose who was Chief Negotiator, and his team of Brian Craik, Norman Hawkins, Robert Mainville and Dave Heritage. We would also like to thank all of the GCCEI/CRA staff and local coordinating committee which organized the events surrounding the signing of this agreement in Eeyou Istchee. Finally, the GCCEI acknowledges and expresses special recognition and gratitude to the original signatories of the JBNQA, as well as all former Grand Chiefs, Deputy Grand Chiefs, all previous members of GCCEI/CRA Board/Council, advisors, and all Cree Elders who acted as advisors to the past and present leadership.

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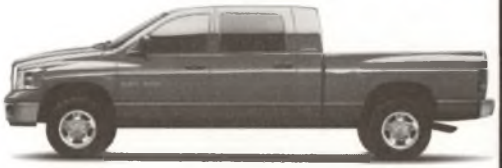

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photo by Ormilla Seecharran

Chisasibi fire victims still accepting donations

Four Chisasibi families who lost everything in a fire February 1 are still accepting donations through the Anglican Church of Eeyou Istchee.

Chisasibi's Assistant Fire Chief, Morris Napash, confirmed the blaze was caused by a seized motor in the ventilation system of one of the apartments on the road behind the James Bay Eeyou School. The fire started between the walls of the building, making it difficult to put out.

Firefighters had to wait until the fire crept into the attic and burst through the roof before they could begin their work.

No one was hurt in the blaze, but the homes and their contents were destroyed by the flames and water damage.

The Anglican Church in Chisasibi held several fundraisers and is still accepting donations on behalf of the four families affected.

Chisasibi Housing Director Jeffrey Kitty says that new housing units have been found and cleaned up for all the four families involved.

Anyone wishing to donate money for the families can make cheques payable to the Anglican Church of Eeyou Istchee, and indicate that the funds are for the fire victims.

Church Treasurer Jimmy R. Fireman indicated that all money received will be divided equally between the four families.

Chisasibi students to watch weather

Students of Chisasibi's James Bay Eeyou School are set to learn the ins and outs of tracking the weather in their community.

They will be using an MK-III Wireless Weather Station which has been installed on the roof of the school courtesy of the Elephant Thoughts Global Development Initiatives organization. The equipment will enable Chisasibi youth to record the temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, rainfall and barometric pressure from within the school.

Starting in March, students will attend workshops on subjects from building solar-hydrogen cars to learning how electricity is produced through hydroelectric power and investigating the impacts of global warming. The students will complete the series of workshops with a short documentary based on their findings.

Once the program ends, the students will be able to produce regular weather reports.

A similar project is expected to launch in Eastmain shortly after.

The project was developed by the Niskamoon Corporation to increase interest for careers in science and technology. In 2005, the Elephant Thoughts organization and the Cree School Board also got involved in order to realize the project.

Nemaska Youth Development Corporation

High above the streets of Montreal at the five star Delta Centre-Ville in a rotating restaurant, a small group of young entrepreneurial pioneers were discussing the future after seeing former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore do his presentation on climate change. Many ideas were thrown around at this supper meeting. The initiative of creating a corporation to promote autonomy and economic development in the youth population was discussed and agreed on.

Upon the return to their home community of Nemaska, two of these participants made plans and acted upon them to form a new corporation. With the help of the right political connections and allies these two young men overcame various obstacles and quandaries. With the assistance of the local economic development officer, the two hired a firm to complete all the legal tasks necessary for the incorporation. The Nemaska Youth Development Corporation was legally incorporated on August 31, 2007.

The corporation is currently running a restaurant and a web café/youth centre. They are in the process of creating a clothing store called "The Underground" which will have its Grand Opening on March 21, 2008. The clientele expectations are geared mainly towards the youth but will have products such as baby clothes, electronics, and other items. The corporation is also working with some potential entrepreneurs in setting up their businesses, offering consultation and assistance. The Nemaska Youth Development Corporation is composed of a board of 11 directors and the sole member of this corporation is the Nemaska Youth Council.

Jeremy Diamond	President
Simeon Wapachee	Vice-President
Nigel Orr	Executive Director
Gary Jolly	Director
Jamie Pashagumskum	Director
Elijah Wapachee	Director
Bill Blackned	Director
Cheryl Wapachee	Director
Silas Blackned	Director
Evelyn Tanoush	Director
Catherine Cheezo	Director

continued on page 29

$1.4 billion deal signed

CREE NATION CELEBRATES THE FINAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JBNQA

By Will Nicholls

Many may say it's been a long time coming but Crees are pretty much looking at the final implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). Signed in 1975 the JBNQA was considered the first modern treaty. However, it was never fully implemented and this led to numerous court cases in an attempt to get the Quebec and Canadian governments to live up to the provisions in the JBNQA.

In 2002 the Paix des Braves was signed seeing unimplemented sections of the JBNQA that were the responsibility of the Quebec government transferred to the Crees along with yearly funding to carry out the obligations. On February 26, the federal government followed suit and signed a New Relationship Agreement with the Crees.

At the signing Grand Chief Matthew Mukash summed up the feeling of the audience when he said, "This is an historic occasion because the signing of this agreement completes the vision of our Elders contained in the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It is also an historic agreement because it provides for our youth and generations yet to come by recognizing Cree Nation government and by setting out a path for its future."

The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, was on hand for the signing and said, "Today's gathering enables us to sign the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship between the Government of Canada and the Cree of Eeyou Istchee. That is the practical purpose of this event. But this ceremony is much more than the opportunity to inscribe a few signatures on a page. This celebration enables us to savour the fruits of a long and complex negotiation process; to appreciate what can be achieved through patient negotiation, collaboration and compromise rather than through litigation."

The Cree have achieved much through this process. They will now take over the responsibilities of section 18 of the JBNQA. This includes the administration of justice and the funding of the Cree Trappers Association (CTA), the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association

Former Mistissini Chief Smally Petawabano and wife

Mr & Mrs Ted Moses and Raymond Chretien and wife

Some of the Wellness Walkers

Air Creebec's Albert Diamond and JP Murdoch

(CNACA), and the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA). It also concerns the administration of manpower and training, including training centres, the construction or provision of community centres, essential sanitation services and fire protection, the provision of an Economic Development Agent in each Cree community and community affairs services.

As well the Agreement resolves past claims and wrongs in regards to the relocations of Nemaska and Waswanipi. It also reimburses the past construction and maintenance of the Nemaska road. The Agreement fully resolves any problems relating to difficulties concerning housing or related infrastructure in any Cree community that was the responsibility of the Canadian government. This includes past constructions, upgrades, improvements, repairs and replacements of Band facilities (band offices, warehouses, garages and related equipment) in any Cree community. Any new facilities and equipment will now be administered and funded by the Agreement monies through the Cree Regional Authority (CRA).

THESE AGREEMENTS HELP FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES ATTAIN WHAT MOST OTHER CANADIANS HAVE LONG TAKEN FOR GRANTED

The new administrative powers mean that the decision of what to do with Washaw Sibi Eeyou will now be an internal decision made by the Cree Nation rather than Ottawa.

Ouje-Bougoumou will be included in a complementary agreement that will look at the establishment of the Ouje-Bougoumou band with Category 1A lands.

Other complementary agreements with the federal government include an amendment to the JBNQA environmental and social impact assessment process to provide for a regional administrator and to replace provisions of Section 19 to create a regional police force. The last has been a hotly contested portion by some of the Municipalité de la Baie James (MBJ) mayors who fear having Cree police administering justice to non-Natives in Eeyou Istchee.

In 18 years Ottawa and the Cree will sit down and negotiate another agreement focusing on continuing the present Agreement. If the Cree and the federal government cannot agree on the terms then Ottawa will resume all responsibilities the Crees have accepted for the term of this Agreement.

Smally Petawabano, an Elder and former chief of Mistissini, when asked by *the Nation*, said, "This Agreement is a good thing." He admitted things were different in the old days when he threw an Indian Affairs agent out of the Band office. "That was one of the things that used to happen. The Indian Affairs guys would come in thinking they're the big bosses. They'd criticize our policy. They'd say since we provide the money for you then you should adopt our by-laws instead of yours. I just got mad and threw him out," said Petawabano. He said that he could see a difference adding, "It's better today."

Minister Strahl would probably be the first to agree with Petawabano that it's better today. During his speech Strahl said, "I can assure everyone here today that our government is making every effort to accelerate the resolution of land-claims and self-government agreements across Canada. Why? Because leaders have been asking for it for decades – and it is the right thing to do."

Cree Conctruction's William MacLeod with wife Mabel and Son Anthony

Someone who still reads *the Nation*

Mistissini's greatest Hab's fan. Notice the color has faded from cap!

The times have changed for the Cree and it does seem to be one where common goals are closer than we think.

Strahl said, "I share your spirit of generosity, optimism and hope – not out of wishful thinking, but because I know the effect that agreements such as land claims and self-government can have on First Nation communities. I have seen firsthand how these agreements help members

Dancing the night away

Billy and Elizabeth Diamond

of First Nation communities attain what most other Canadians have long taken for granted – safe homes, quality health services, good schools, meaningful jobs and bright futures."

Mukash showed he was on the same page in his speech when he said, "This Agreement, and indeed the James Bay Agreement, has importance for First Nation Peoples all across Canada. The James Bay Agreement set out a new form of cooperative federalism that included the Crees and northern Quebec Inuit communities. The problem for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada is this: 'How can they, how can we, become more involved in the governance, economic and social development and cultural life of Canada?' In everyday terms, how can we make a meaningful and prosperous way of life for ourselves here in Canada?"

He added, "With this present Agreement we will implement for 20 years parts of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement that the federal government had difficulties in implementing in the past. In other words, we will decide on a new and innovative way forward. In doing so, the Cree Nation takes on certain responsibilities of the government of Canada to our own citizens. We gain the chance to decide our own priorities in these matters and we have the chance to develop and to demonstrate our ability to govern efficiently."

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Interview with **Grand Chief Matthew Mukash** and the press scrum with **Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl**.

Grand Chief Matthew Mukash

The Nation: *You signed the deal and as Cuba Gooding Jr. said 'Show me the money.' It should be in on March 10?*

Grand Chief Matthew Mukash: We're hoping by March 10.

What about safeguards? How is the money going to be controlled and spent?

First of all I would like to say the signing of this agreement was a historic day on February 26. It was a day for celebration and a new beginning. That was a big day for the Cree Nation. What was that question again?

I was asking about safeguards. The last agreement seemed like a cash grab with some of the things promised never materializing? We're told this one wouldn't be of that nature. How is this going to happen?

Well, yes, we've put in place a by-law on the Cree Nation Trust. It will have seven members and they will ensure the money is spent in accordance to the terms and conditions of the agreement. So there will be means to control the spending and there will be guidelines to help guide the deliberations of the Cree Nation Trust.

If we don't do that, in 20 years when the funding is spent then the federal government will have a reason not to fund those things we are now taking responsibility for.

Do you feel this signals a new direction for the Cree Nation?

Definitely – especially in the next five years. In the next two, we'll be coming up with an agreement in principle on governance. Then we'll have three years to come up with a final agreement on governance. So there will be a lot of time to consult with people on envisioning what we want and think of concerning Cree governance. Mind you, the federal government will try to come up with a Cree government that has limited powers. We have three years where it will be a tripod-type process where Quebec's jurisdiction will be touched upon. So we have a process we can rely on to give us an opportunity to get the best type of governance.

Quebec wasn't part of this Agreement or process to date, do you anticipate any problems?

Quebec will be involved because we will be discussing matters outside of category I lands. We have to discuss the problems we are experiencing with MBJ.

What we want is a structure in place where everyone's happy in regards to the governance of the territory. We know it's going to be difficult to arrive there but we have to educate not only the governments but also the people as to what the vision the Cree Nation is and what we want for its future.

Given the current problems with MBJ, do you think these conflicts will increase or will there be some sort of resolution?

We are following the resolution process put in place under the new relationship agreement with Quebec that was signed in 2002. We have already sent a notice of constitutional question to Quebec because we feel the treaty rights of the Cree are being trampled upon by MBJ. In regards to Bill 40, which was adopted to amend the creation of MBJ, it was done without consultation with the Cree. We have arguments in place we wish to bring forward to Quebec through the liaison committee.

I know there is no solution now so the next step is mediation and if it doesn't work we go to court.

Wasn't the whole idea behind the agreements to stop going to court?

There are certain issues that we agreed that we wouldn't be going to court over, such as Quebec's responsibilities to the Crees under the JBNQA. But where we feel our rights are violated under any agreement whether it's the JBNQA or the Paix des Braves we can still go to court on these matters. It's the same under the federal agreement. If the treaty rights are not respected then we have the rights to legal action.

What would you say is the most important aspect of the Agreement with the federal government that you just signed?

The most important aspect is not there yet but the provision for it is there. I'm referring to the creation of Cree governance by means of the constitution. The Agreement itself merely provides a way to implement the federal responsibilities under the JBNQA.

The additional powers that are granted to the Cree government to carry these responsibilities out are a good thing for our people and our nation.

There are other parts of this agreement that are very much in favour of the Crees.

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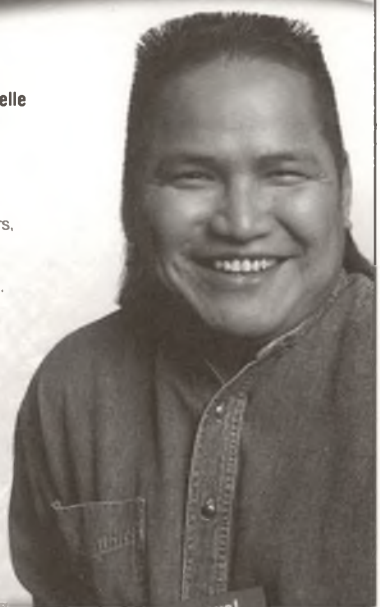

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Was anything given up?

No, we didn't have to give up another river. That's a good thing. The only thing you could say we gave up was the court cases that were pending such as the Coon Come case.

But there are some court cases that are still pending so they will still be going onward.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'm really happy this Agreement has been concluded. We have been in negotiation with the federal government for about 33 years and we have come a long way. Leaders have come and gone in that time. Some of them are no longer with us but their wisdom has brought us to this point. I'm happy to see those Elders here today who advised our leaders in the early 1970s when the negotiations began. Some are still around as well as leaders such as Philip Awashish, Smally Petawabaro, Robert Kanatewat and others. These people were instrumental in helping to put together the strategy to stand up for our rights. I was also happy to see the former three Grand Chiefs present at the signing. They also signed the Agreement as witnesses.

We forgot one who was there briefly as the chairman of the Cree Regional Authority, Abel Kitchen.

But what I really want to say is that I am really happy for the Cree Nation. We still have a long way to go conclude the governance negotiations. I'm looking forward to the consultations and negotiations. I want to hear more of the wisdom from the people.

What about the other side of the fence. Was there anyone on the federal side you felt was outstanding?

The federal negotiator Raymond Chrétien was very instrumental in getting this agreement signed. He is a very educated man who was ambassador to a few countries for many years. So he had an idea of the problems that have faced Indigenous peoples around the world. The federal government could not have chosen a better person for that type of work. He did a great job.

Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl

The Nation: *Now that you've signed an agreement, what do you think it means to the Crees?*

Chuck Strahl: I don't want to put words in the mouths of the Cree leadership or the people but what's clear to me over the past couple of days we spent here is that this is the culmination of a couple of generations of work. People were keen to show me photographs from 1971 and of the work done by their leaders – some of them with us and some passed on. I think this is a really fine moment for the Crees, who can look at this as a recognition of what they mean as a nation and giving them more and more control over their destiny. It's a great moment and it's a delight to be part of it.

Do you see this as a model for other First Nations?

I think it could be but we are always careful to say there is no one tenet. Each First Nation has its own style and what it wants to achieve. What it does show is that when people of good will sit down and negotiate, and the Grand Chief and I have talked about that, you build on a sound relationship. When we get that relationship right and we talk to each other as equals we are trying to achieve those common goals and what is good for the people then a good deal can come out of it. This is a very good deal and it sets the stage for many years to come. It addresses some of the wrongs of the past. When you do that in a signing ceremony such as this and move forward together it sets a good tone. So any agreements we sign elsewhere can match that, in tone at least, we'll have achieved great things.

So there was a deal signed 30 years ago and this Agreement is to implement part of it but when will the money be arriving to implement it?

Well, I had my cheque in my other jacket. It will happen quickly now. There are some technical things as it has to go back into the system. It's just a matter of days. It will go very quickly. It has the two-fold benefit of not only addressing the wrongs of the past but more importantly it sets an optimistic tone for the future. It's a pleasure to be a part of that signing ceremony and we'll be able to do this very quickly now.

Why do you believe in signing this Agreement with the Crees of northern Quebec?

I believe it's an honour to sign on behalf of Canada. I think for two reasons as it addresses some of the poor implementation of the past. We understand and recognize that although there were good intentions in the past but it was not always implemented properly. So this Agreement addresses some of the weaknesses in the implementation and more importantly it addresses opportunities, optimism and resources for the future. So between the two it's a good thing, recognizing the stakes and addressing them and setting in place things for the future, including a framework for moving forward on governance issues which we hope to negotiate quickly as well. It's a very optimistic document we've signed today, not just for the money but because of the relationship we've formed between Canada and the Cree Nation.

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Cree Regional Authority
Administration regional Crie

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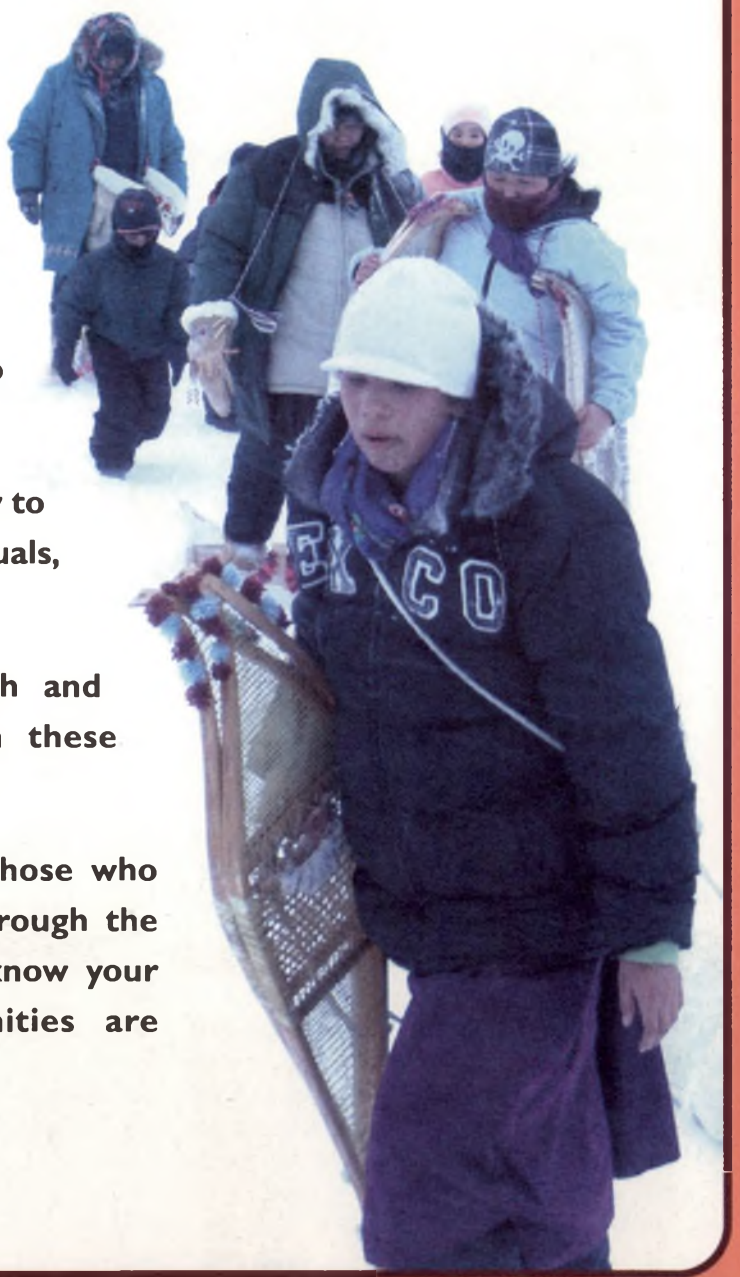
Grand Council of the Crees
(Eeyou Istchee)
Grand conseil des Cris
(Eeyou Istchee)

The Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Regional Authority would like to encourage the youth who have committed themselves to the

Journey Through the Heart of Eeyou Istchee 2008 – Journey of Hope, Embracing Life.



When the first wellness walk started in our territories, it was an event that opened the hearts of our people. In the land, our culture, ways and history remain for those who take the opportunity to become more familiar with them.

The land and ways have a great ability to help us as we return to it as individuals, families or communities to heal.

Over the years, many Cree youth and community members have taken these journeys for many reasons.

This year, once again we honour those who have taken part in this Journey Through the Heart of Eeyou Istchee walk, we know your lives and ours in the communities are improved by events such as these.

Former Grand Chiefs speak out

Matthew Coon Come

"Today, 32 years after entering into Canada's first so-called 'modern' agreement, the federal Crown has finally arrived to meaningfully address the obligations it assumed when the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed in 1975. The James Bay Crees are not receiving some kind of a gift today. We are being afforded a minimal opportunity to finally begin to benefit from our ancient birthrights as a people. We are the owners and occupants of this Territory, and since King Charles gave our land to the Hudson Bay Co. in the 1600s, we have been living under an absentee colonial regime. Today, this colonial era finally begins to come to an end. It's about time."

To our young people:

Today is another milestone, another achievement for the Cree Nation but yet,

The Greatest story has not been told yet

The Greatest song has not been sung yet and

The Greatest film has not been made yet

Our young people, the future will do greater things than we did. They will write new chapters and provide new leadership with a greater vision and a bigger dream.

I have full confidence that they can build on the foundation that we as Cree leadership have laid.

Matthew Coon Come

Drs. Ted Moses O.Q.

My Comments on the New Cree/Canada Agreement:

The new Agreement with Canada is Phase II of the Paix des Braves Agreement. It would have been finished two years ago if there hadn't been an election, but it is good to see that it is now signed. It brings funding for parts of the James Bay Agreement that Canada refused to implement.

The James Bay Agreement problems started soon after it was signed in 1975. They were the reason we went to the United Nations to fight for Indigenous rights and to court, as we couldn't trust Canada or Quebec to respect our rights. Our people were sick and dying due to the lack of sewer and water systems. We lobbied in Ottawa for improvements and all communities got sewer and water services, some airports were built and the Cree/Naskapi Act was passed in 1984 - leading to another long fight for funding. But, governments still owed us housing, job training, police and justice services, community centres, and other things.

History proved that Canada and Quebec would not look after our interests.

By 1989 Quebec wanted to build more dams, but neither it nor Canada had lived up to the James Bay Treaty. Our fight against the dams showed them in 1994 that they had better respect the Crees or they might lose again.

In the Paix des Braves, we took over many of Quebec's obligations to us and the money to implement them for 50 years, as we would decide. The deal also set the price for Canada to settle its obligations.

In the new Agreement, like the Paix des Braves, we take over many of Canada's obligations to us, but the Canada money is only for 20 years.

The new Agreement also settles all claims for the past. When the money comes in, many communities may have claims, but this Agreement cannot pay for them. Every cent is accounted for and any spent on one community's past claims, will be a loss to all communities because the money for future housing, sewer and water systems and the other obligations of Canada to all Crees will be reduced. The more we put into such claims, the less Canada will pay when the Agreement is renewed. That's the deal! We now face new threats. The MBJ claims Eeyou Istchee, so who will stand up to them?

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Standing up for his Aboriginal right

Jimmy Cooper will defend his right to hunt all the way to jail

By Steve Bonspiel

Jimmy Cooper and his traditional right to hunt wild game is being called into question once again. This time however, the courts have set a date for his incarceration and the Grand Council has vowed not to fight for Cooper because if it lost, the precedent the case would set could adversely affect Cree rights in the future.

As of April 15, barring a minor miracle, Jimmy Cooper will spend 10 days in jail for practicing traditional pursuits.

Provincial game wardens "caught" Cooper hunting on farm land below the 49th parallel in Val d'Or. Cooper was given permission by the farmer to hunt there, but according to the Grand Council of the Crees, his consent has no bearing on Cree hunting rights.

"It doesn't matter if the farmer gave him the right to hunt, technically he is not allowed to because it is out of the treaty area of the Crees," said Bill Namagoose, Grand Council Executive Director, in reference to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

Namagoose warned against setting a dangerous precedent by taking the issue to court and citing Aboriginal hunting rights as a reason to allow Crees to hunt outside JBNQA-defined borders.

He also went on to say that the Grand Council is ready to pay for Cooper's fines incurred and to supply him with a lawyer, providing he pleads guilty to the misdemeanour.

"They don't fully comprehend why I would raise my Aboriginal rights and what I mean by that," said Cooper. "Their hands are bound because of the agreements they signed. I'm not here to dismantle the agreements, I'm here to straighten them and enhance Aboriginal rights.

"Even in our Cree territory, the laws overlap us," he said. "We can't even travel on the skidoo trail if we're hunting," Cooper said of the Federated Skidoo Trails that require permits to travel on.

Cooper was fined a few years back for traveling on part of that trail on his own land, which he paid.

"All these trails are on our traplines – on Cree land," he said. "What's the difference between here and out there? Why do they have rights to implement their laws on Cree land and we can't assert our rights there?"

Cooper also said that if he can raise money to hire a lawyer independent of the Grand Council, he will fight the case based on a technicality. When he was apprehended by the game wardens he was on water – which is federal jurisdiction and therefore not subject to provincial laws. His guns and the day's haul were seized and he was treated like a criminal.

After he pleaded not guilty at a court date in 2004, he was found guilty at a follow-up date in November of that year that he could not attend.

Jimmy Cooper

Cooper said that the territory in question, which is an ill-defined buffer zone, was open to every nation who wished to hunt there in the past. It's only now that hunting and fishing rights are worth a large sum of money to the province that his inherent right to hunt on the land is being called into question. Politics also play a big part in hunting rights.

"I plan to get a lawyer and fight," he said. "I'm not only here to fight for myself but for other people in Eeyou Istchee as well as the Algonquins and other tribes to exercise that right. It's important for all Aboriginal rights."

Namagoose talked about a case a few years ago where Cree hunters were invited onto Algonquin territory to hunt, only to be turned in to the game wardens by other Algonquin hunters. In that case, their guns were seized and they were forced to pay the fine to get their rifles back.

The sticky situation of lending hunting rights from one nation to another is still not clearly defined.

"It's unclear if Aboriginal rights could be given from one nation to another to hunt on its territory," said Namagoose. "If others oppose, it's a losing battle.

"If Jimmy wants to fight it in court on an Aboriginal rights basis, that's a fight we cannot win at this time," said Namagoose who stated that a fight to assert Cree rights over territory traditionally hunted on by numerous different nations, would take "20 to 30 years."

He said the Grand Council will continue to stand up for Cree rights, but only if they have a good chance of winning.

"In that case, the Algonquins would have testified against the Crees and we would have lost," he said. "We fight the fights we know we can win. The ones we are sure we cannot win, we don't bother."

Cooper is ready for any outcome.

"My grandpa went to jail for hunting in that area once, so why not go to jail even if I lose my case? At least I said something and did not give up my rights as an Aboriginal."

Jack Blacksmith

Bill Namagoose

Making the nation stronger

Conference stresses self-reliance through economic development

By Steve Bonspiel

Economic development officers, local band administrators and various heads of Aboriginal companies met in Montreal February 12-14 to exchange ideas and foster new business relations as a way to strengthen ties that will boost economic productivity.

A large crowd of about 900 people from many of the 633 bands across Canada gathered at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel for the three-day Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada Conference 2008.

A presentation was made by Grand Council Executive Director Bill Namagoose to explain the impact two major agreements have had on the Cree way of life.

A third, the recently signed $1.4 billion deal to make Canada live up to their obligations under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), was heralded as long overdue.

"We're convinced if we hadn't defeated the Great Whale project and took part in the sovereignty issue with Quebec, there wouldn't be a Paix des Braves, and without that there wouldn't be the federal deal," Namagoose told *the Nation*.

Namagoose called on business-minded Crees to step up and be a part of the ever-growing economic Cree world.

"One of the greatest weaknesses of Aboriginal business in Canada is administration," he said. "If we had more of an administrative capacity in the Cree communities, our self-government would be far more advanced. It bodes well for the future if we can get an administrative arm focused in advance; it would help the overall cause."

Namagoose cited agreements in Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories as similar to the Cree deal in that they are now realizing how little the federal government lives up to its obligations for land claims.

"They thought they would just take our lands and our rivers and they would get all the profits and the Crees would be out of the way. It doesn't work that way," said Namagoose.

He talked about the Cree negotiating strategy, called the incremental approach.

"If you have a strategy of all or nothing, you usually get nothing. With the incremental approach at least you're advancing, you're going up the river and you're portaging. You can't carry all the goods in the same canoe; you have to do several trips. That's what the Crees are doing."

Bill 54, or the Cree Policing Agreement, has come under fire recently from angry Municipalité de la Baie James mayors who think it gives too much control to Cree police over the MBJ territory and surrounding non-Native towns.

The agreement, which is a part of the JBNQA and has been in negotiations for over 30 years, would see Cree police respond to calls in neighbouring towns, but only if a Cree were involved and only with the assistance of local police.

Namagoose stressed that Cree police have gone through the same training as the Sûreté de Québec, so the worries of people like MBJ Chair Gerald Lemoyne are unfounded.

Recent meetings with provincial MNA's to gather information on the agreement and to give a chance to MBJ mayors to express theirs, was all for naught, according to Namagoose.

When asked if the bill would be affected in any way because of the MBJ's concerns, he was terse.

"No. From the meetings we had, they are enough votes to carry the legislation. They will not change or amend the agreement. When we negotiated with the (provincial) government, it represents the MBJ. When you start negotiating with quasi-governments, there will be no end to that process."

Geordy Marshall, Sayla Spence and Rebecca Sangwais

The Mohawk contingent

The Youth

Aboriginal Youth Financial Management Conference Awards were given out to three promising youth from across the country.

After receiving their awards, the three high school students were pumped.

"I feel really good," said Geordy Marshall, an 18-year old student at Eskasoni High School in Nova Scotia. "It makes me feel like I'm a leader and I can contribute my ideas to my community. This experience is the foundation of my future."

Marshall won for his essay on many problems that transcend Aboriginal borders. Economic development through tourism and drugs and alcohol prevention were some of the topics.

He also wrote about an "open door policy" if he were elected chief, which would allow his community a greater voice in day-to-day operations of the band and more of a say in the Mi'kmaq community's future.

> That's not the chief I'm going to be. My only dream is to help other people succeed in their dreams.

Marshall's community is over $30 million in debt, according to him, and he said drastic measures are needed to change that.

"I haven't seen a chief who wants to accomplish anyone else's dreams; they only want to think about themselves," he said. "That's not the chief I'm going to be. My only dream is to help other people succeed in their dreams."

Rebecca Sangwais, 17, and Sayla Spence, 15, were also presented with the youth award for their vision of better things to come.

"The most important part is having positive role models and a lot of support from your parents or whoever is raising you," said Spence, who wants to take business courses once she gets to college.

"It's also important not to be exposed to alcohol and drugs."

Sangwais reiterated Marshall's message.

"We need to have better leadership in our community and to make sure there is accountability as well as fairness and equality amongst our people," she said.

Sangwais touched on the residential school "hurt" and the need to overcome the grief and suffering to create a brighter future for all with the continued guidance of the Elders.

She also had a strong message to stay away from drugs and alcohol in order for our communities to prosper.

"Coming to this conference has opened a lot of doors," she said. "There is a lot of talk of more youth needed in the business field and I think there would be a lot of opportunities.

"We need good strong leaders who know what they want and have a good vision to implement it."

Cree Development

"One of the most important things at this conference is specific to finance," said Jack Blacksmith, Chairman of the Board of Compensation and Creeco.

"By talking to other people, it helps us in terms of seeing that it's not much different in the way we do things. You also learn a lot when you compare notes with other First Nations."

Blacksmith has been involved in a number of business ventures set up to stimulate the Cree economy. One of which is a deal between Crees in Manitoba to teach them various aspects of construction for the Victor Nickel Mine Project. Blacksmith said that one of the conditions of the deal, which has yet to be signed, is to leave some of that expertise with the community so they can use these skills to serve their communities in the future.

"We're looking to foster better business relations," said Blacksmith. "Not only for an opportunity for ourselves, but to help them out in certain areas that we're a little more advanced in."

Blacksmith also talked about the potentially lucrative deal with a Chinese furniture manufacturer who would purchase large amounts of softwood from the inland Cree communities.

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"China is one of the most heavily populated countries in the world," said Blacksmith. "If we don't look at that as an economic opportunity, then the train will be gone and we'll be left behind at the station again. We have to look at opportunities that exist there."

Blacksmith cited a finite amount of hardwood in China as a major factor in the Asian country's search for something to replace it.

"The Cree world is a small world," he said. "Economic development wise, the opportunities are there. But whatever we develop or manufacture, we'll always rely on the outside world. The Crees have to understand that whatever product we make, we'll have to go outside Quebec and Canada."

A load of softwood lumber was sent to the manufacturer in China, called Premier Company, a couple of years ago. Although a deal has not yet been signed, Blacksmith sees this as part of the future to bolster the Cree economy as the Chinese have already started to purchase non-traditional softwood lumber from other parts of Canada and the U.S.

"I've heard people say it's a far-fetched idea, but the reality of economic development is how big you want to make it. If you work hard at it, the sky's the limit. If you don't, you are limiting your opportunities."

Although Creeco did not have a booth on location to take advantage of this annual traveling conference, Blacksmith hoped to fix that for next year.

"This conference opens up our eyes as to what others are doing," he said. "We have to look at our whole traditional territory and stand up and say 'that's our land, our territory' and that we will develop it the way we see fit, on a more sustainable basis."

The Paix des Braves should not be relied upon as one of the main generators of cash flow, he cautioned. Once it runs dry in less than 44 years, the Crees will need a contingency plan for the future generations to prosper.

> If we don't look at that as an economic opportunity, then the train will be gone and we'll be left behind at the station again.

"What ever money we get from the government is never enough," said Blacksmith. "I think as Cree people we have to make those opportunities our own in terms of the economy. We have to make the tourism, mining and forestry sector our own. We really have to examine those things and see how much more we can participate and invest in those opportunities that exist for us.

"The agreements we signed – those monies will hopefully be used for economic development. We need to create that base. If we don't have employment and economic development for our people, no matter what we do, we'll never be strong as a nation. We need to create that economic base for the future of our people and the well being of the communities."

letters

Strengthening our Mother Tongue

I want to thank Charlie Kowcharlie for his views (Vol. 15, No. 7 – Feb. 15, 2008) on the teaching of a second language and education in general. I must say that what Mr. Kowcharlie is raising is very disturbing and it is disturbing in the sense that we are in such a situation in education that he is obliged to suggest that we go back to the original government policies in how our children are to be taught.

I believe that First Nations should set informed education priorities and the use of the Mother Tongue within those priorities.

Many First Nations are realizing that the (forced) loss of the use and presence of their original languages is a matter of great concern. Language is one of the direct connections to a people's culture; as Aboriginal peoples, our language is very closely tied to our culture and identity.

The loss of language and culture and the corresponding loss of identity is attributed by many aboriginal people to the serious social conditions historically endured.

Speaking on the situation of the Cree of eastern James Bay, it was decided by our School Board in the early 1980s that Cree would be the language of instruction in the primary grades. The importance here is that the Cree is not treated as a subject but as a language of instruction. The second language (French or English) would be phased in with a definite educational plan. Considering that we still have our own education problems, the key here is to make the transition from the Mother Tongue to the second language; making relevant the knowledge gained with the use of the Mother Tongue. Despite the important decision made by our educational authorities in consultation with each of the School Committees, we still need to make real innovations on the optimum use of educational approaches and not to lose the cognitive links of subjects learned in the transition from one language to the other.

The issue here is not the use of the Mother Tongue delaying the learning of a second language and jeopardizing educational progress within the national education system but securing the use of the Mother Tongue and making a solid transition of concepts learned to the second language. We cannot afford to use our Mother Tongue as an excuse for lack of achievement in other realms of education.

James Bobbish
Chisasibi

LES GRANDS PRIX DU TOURISME QUÉBÉCOIS 2008

Grands PRIX du Tourisme Québécois

Desjardins 2008

De nature et de culture...

Pour la première fois cette année, Tourisme Baie-James s'associe avec la nouvelle association touristique régionale crie, Tourisme Eeyou Istchee, pour présenter le gala régional qui se tiendra le 3 avril prochain à Mistissini. Cette collaboration représente un défi à relever pour les deux associations et permettra de créer des rapprochements entre les deux communautés et l'industrie touristique.

Le gala régional des Grand Prix du tourisme québécois Desjardins vise à reconnaître les entreprises qui se démarquent par leur excellence et leurs efforts en tourisme.

Nous invitons tous les représentants de l'industrie touristique à se joindre à nous pour cet événement. Pour ce faire, veuillez communiquer avec nous au 1-888-748-8140.

Of nature and culture...

For the first time this year, James Bay Tourism is partnering with the new regional Cree tourism association, Eeyou Istchee Tourism, for the presentation of the regional gala that will be held April 3rd, 2008 in Mistissini. The collaboration between both associations in rising to meet this challenge can only strengthen and increase the relationship between the two communities and the tourism industry.

The regional gala of the Desjardins Quebec Tourism Awards recognizes businesses that have distinguished themselves by their excellence and efforts in the tourism industry.

We would like to invite all representatives from the Tourism industry to join us for this event. In order to do so, simply get in touch with us at 1-888-748-8140.

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ISLANDS IN THE STREAM

The Cree and Inuit share their claim to two offshore islands in northern Quebec

By Amy German

Islands that were left out of the James Bay Agreement are finally in the process of being claimed by the Crees through the federal government as the Crees follow suit with the Inuit who have just been formally granted rights of two offshore islands.

Brian Craik, director of Federal Relations for the Grand Council of the Crees, said, "When the James Bay Agreement was negotiated, the Crees and the federal government realised that the Crees had claims on the offshore islands. So, the federal government sent a letter to the Crees and to the Inuit saying that they recognized that the Cree and the Inuit had these claims on the offshore and that were not touched by the James Bay Agreement. And so, they negotiated an agreement similar to the James Bay Agreement to respect Cree rights and clarify the administration of the islands. Negotiations happened in the 1970s but there was no result. In the end, the two sides could not agree."

According to Craik, "Since that time, Nunavut was set up and the Nunavut agreement was signed. But before the Quebec Inuit signed it, the Makivik Inuit wanted to negotiate an agreement with Canada. It was with respect to their rights and their part of the offshore in northern Quebec because the similar rights were being negotiated for Nunavut Inuit so there had to be some kind of a recognition of who owned what."

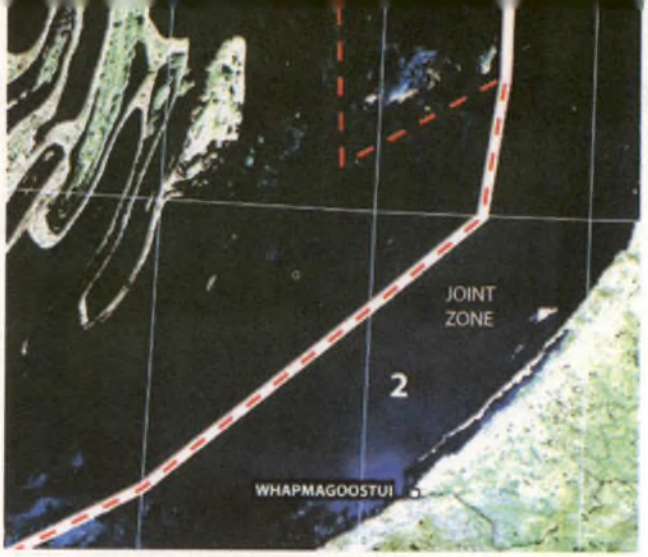
The Inuit managed to negotiate an agreement and it took them over a decade to get the approval for the land. "It was promulgated by Parliament last year, and just passed by the Senate," said Craik.

With this in mind, the Crees also began to negotiate. "The Crees initially were looking for negotiations that covered similar types of regimes and everything under the offshore that were existent under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement which is basically consistent with what the minister had written back in 1974. But Canada had already passed a law, which recognized that all of the islands in the offshore were part of the territory of Nunavut," said Craik.

Since the Cree islands had always been recognised as part of the Northwest Territories, when Nunavut was created, the islands became part of Nunavik in the eyes of Canadian lawmakers.

"For the Crees, nothing had ever changed, they just continued to occupy the territory as they always had. They hunted, fished and trapped on the offshore and they did not recognise anybody's jurisdictions but their own and to some degree the Inuit because the Inuit occupied certain areas jointly with the Crees. In particular the area in between Long Island and north of Whapmagoostui," said Craik.

The Crees and the Inuit at this point decided to hold discussions on how to negotiate the rights for the offshore and how to recognize each other's rights and they came to a decision. "The Crees would recognize that the Inuit have the right to hunt in certain areas north of the mouth of the La Grande



Map of area north of Whapmagoostu

River all the way to Long Island. And the Inuit agreed that the Crees would have rights to hunt along the coast and north of Richmond Sound," said Craik.

The decision was basically for joint ownership and in that the Crees and the Inuit decided not to divide up the islands. Should one group wish to build anything, such as a marina or a dock, all it needs to do is seek permission from the other party. "There is no tension on either party's side about building anything on the islands, it's just that they decided to own the islands jointly," said Craik.

Recently the Senate passed the Inuit agreement and so that means that it's been accepted into treaty and it recognizes Inuit and Canadian rights of those offshore islands in northern Quebec down to Long Island. But, according to Craik, "because the Inuit and the Crees also have an agreement on the joint islands down to Long Island. And because the Inuit agreement includes the Cree/Inuit agreement in it, the Cree rights to the land jointly held with the Inuit, those islands down to Long Island are also recognized because they are also recognized as being treaty rights by Canada."

The Grand Council has been in negotiations with Canada recently in regards to regimes for land, planning, natural resources, impact assessment and wildlife.

"The islands will be owned by all Crees, they will not be owned by any one community," said Craik. "It will be the communities who will have hunters and trappers committees to oversee how hunting will be conducted on those islands adjacent to their communities."

In terms of natural resources, Craik said that some mineral deposits have been found around the Wemindji area, but not much else has been detected other than fish. And there have been no reports of any oil.

Once the agreement between Canada and the Crees is almost finalized, it will be subject to consultation with the Cree community though on what scale is yet to be determined.

"After the consultation there will be a referendum held on the agreement to see if people want it signed or not. The earliest we would like to see it happen is this fall and it's much more likely for some time next year," said Craik.

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What about the women?

Beverly Jacobs denounces Feds' failure to support Aboriginal women

By Amy German

The Canadian government is short-changing its Aboriginal peoples, and in particular Aboriginal women, according to Native Women's Association of Canada president Beverly Jacobs, so much so that it's time to hit the streets with placards again.

The new federal budget came as no surprise to Jacobs as, in her opinion, "with this government there has never been any real commitments to Aboriginal people and specifically money enough for women in general. So, that leaves Aboriginal women again totally out of the picture."

Though the 2008 budget made provisions for clean water on reserves, according to NWAC it is simply not enough. In a public statement on behalf of NWAC, Jacobs said, "What is the point of improving standards for drinking water on reserves, when there is a housing crisis with no access to water? When this government chose not to honour the Kelowna Accord, it promised an alternative plan for Aboriginal peoples. This budget delivers small investments, but we are still awaiting a ground-breaking strategy to finally pull the most marginalized segment of the Canadian population out of its current mire and onto a path towards prosperity."

Housing is a major issue for Aboriginal communities across the country but despite criticism from even the United Nations, Canada has yet to move on socialized housing on reserves, as opposed to the funding provided for market housing in 2007. When asked if Canada was trying to bury the housing issue, Jacobs responded, "Well of course! It's not just a housing issue, it's the land-rights issue. It's the land-claims issue across the country that First Nations and Aboriginal communities are wanting to resolve."

For as much as she was glad that the water issue was being addressed, the fact that individuals would need a house to access it is still distressing for Jacobs as she believes it is still a much larger issue.

Housing and funding for women were not the only issues that irked Jacobs about the new budget. "What I find the most stunning is that Canada is doubling international aid to $5 billion, which is honourable. But why is it not doubling its efforts in combating poverty in its own back yard?"

When asked if this was an international P.R. move, Jacobs responded, "I have been doing a lot of work at the UN with Indigenous peoples across the world. The perception from other peoples in different countries is that we have no problems here in this country, especially when it comes to human rights."

With all of the work that Canada does abroad in terms of helping impoverished and war-torn nations, there is a perception that the country is left-leaning and accommodates its own needy. But that has not been the case. Citing Canada's rejection and efforts to lobby against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Jacobs expressed extreme frustration. "We are stuck in this place called Canada, which to me is totally embarrassing when you are going to a UN meeting and Indigenous people are asking, what is going on in your country?" Jacobs said.

"WE ARE STUCK IN THIS PLACE CALLED CANADA, WHICH TO ME IS TOTALLY EMBARRASSING WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO A UN MEETING AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE ASKING,

WHAT IS GOING ON IN YOUR COUNTRY?"

While the lack of funding was a disappointment to NWAC, the fact that Canada announced funding to hire 2500 new police officers could be positive in that it might prompt resolutions in the over 500 cases of missing and/or murdered Aboriginal women across Canada. At the same time, Jacobs said, "whether or not that actually happens is another story.

"Aboriginal women are specific targets of violence because they are Aboriginal and because they are women, so they have two strikes against them," said Jacobs, speaking of the need for more protection for Aboriginal women. These remarks came hot off the heels of British Columbia's decision to not pursue a second trial for convicted serial killer Robert Pickton, a decision that has NWAC up in arms.

Though Pickton was already tried and convicted for the murders of six women, he was to be tried a second time for 20 other women and the majority of Pickton's victims were of Aboriginal descent. The trial would have gone through if the crown had accepted Pickton's appeal but it was denied leaving the families of 20 murdered victims without justice or even a day in court. "We will never know if it actually was Pickton who killed those women. There is a huge gap there and a long process of healing for those families. I have heard from some of the families and how disappointed they are. Where do they go from here?"

To add insult to injury, this most recent development in the Pickton case has only highlighted the vulnerability of Aboriginal women and the lack of interest in terms of law enforcement when it comes to finding and prosecuting the perpetrators. "You know they are getting away with it. For example, let's say we have 400 murders of Aboriginal women across the country – I am just picking a number out of the air – of which 300 are unresolved. There is either one serial killer who is after 300 women or there are 300 perpetrators out there who are

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Briefs continued from page 9

Ontario Aboriginal communities slated to get $3 billion in lotto funds

Over $3 billion in revenue sharing from Ontario's lotteries and casinos will be directed to Native communities throughout the province, over the next 25 years.

The newly inked agreement will see the money earmarked for community health care, education and infrastructure.

In total, 134 Aboriginal communities will get $201 million immediately, and 1.7 percent of Ontario's gaming revenues, beginning in 2011.

Although the money is welcome, leaders in the region say it won't cover essential needs in their communities.

A badly needed elementary school in Attawapiskat, for example, is budgeted at $30 million. The community had drawn up the plan for a new school but the federal government backed out of financing it last December.

Under the new lotto agreement Attawapiskat's Deputy Chief Theresa Linklater expects the First Nation to receive $2.8 million. The money will go towards education, health, social and cultural development, and economic and community development, says Linklater, but cannot fund building a new school.

A working team from the community will continue to lobby the federal government's Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs for the new school, Linklater told *the Nation*.

Currently, elementary school students are attending classes in portable cubicles, which have shifted on their foundations, stopping doors and windows from closing properly. Their former school was closed over eight years ago due to contamination from a federal pipeline leaking over 30,000 gallons of diesel fuel directly underneath the school.

The lotto deal ends three years of negotiations for Ontario chiefs, who have also agreed to drop an ongoing lawsuit over taxation and revenue sharing from Casino Rama, near Orillia, Ontario.

NWAC continued from page 25

saying 'yahoo! I am getting away with this,' and I am just so tired of it," said Jacobs.

Case in point, on February 20, Vancouver advocate for sex-trade workers, Jamie Lee Hamilton, released a list of 26 women missing or murdered in Metro Vancouver since February 2002 and made statements to the media on how the problem has only become worse since Pickton's arrest.

"We are going back in time dealing with this government," said Jacobs in regards to the current situation. "If we go back to the 1970s, that's when Aboriginal people started to become very vocal and started to say 'that's enough!' I know that is what's happening today with Aboriginal women across the country with really strong voices who are saying these things and saying that is enough and what do we have to do? Do we have to have more Caledonia's across the country in order for the public to understand what these issues are about?" said Jacobs.

For the time being NWAC is looking to rally the troops for support. "What we are doing as an organization now is to gather our allies you know, non-Aboriginal organizations, those that support the rights of our people, the voters, people who can start challenging their MPs. To me, that is our next move, to start gathering those who are like-minded and start challenging, start campaigns, start being much more public and vocal and as much as possible," said Jacobs.

Mushrooms continued from page 7

way to harvest the land for sustainable development but to protect the land as well."

Hamel has spoken to Gerald Legal, owner of les Gourmets Sauvage, a company that specializes in harvesting mushrooms and other wild products.

"He understands that the future of harvesting non-timber products is with the Cree," said Hamel. "He realizes without the Cree he won't be able to develop his business."

Hamel and Eric House of CBSC are trying a last ditch effort to get into the Rural Laboratories project which has been closed to the Crees as of December.

"That project should be open to everyone in the MBJ, not just the non-Natives," said Hamel.

The harvesting also enables those who are not out moose or goose hunting to collect the mushrooms and to make extra money, said Hamel.

"They will have an activity on their land that will help them keep their traditional way of life while bringing them revenues during the key months of August and September."

Hamel sees a niche tourism sector that could allow Japanese tourists the chance to harvest their own mushrooms, with the blessing of the local tallyman, and re-sell them in their native country. In Japan, the mushrooms are worth 11 times their marketable value in Canada.

Training will be given to tallymen during the summer and fall on how to harvest, treat and dry the mushrooms. They are also looking at harvesting berries.

"Eventually it will touch every product made from the land," said Hamel. "For example, a tamarack tree used to make snowshoes and moose hide are other products that come from the land."

A courier deal with empty KEPA trucks heading south could reduce shipping costs.

Although the project is starting off slow by focusing on Chisasibi traplines first, a meeting with the Cree Trappers Association to inform every tallyman through information packages is in the works.

"The potential of non-timbers products in Eeyou Istchee is incredible," said Hamel. "You can make soup with the dried mushrooms or trail mix with the dried berries and that is only a small part of each trapline's potential."

Pssst...

Have any information you'd like to share with *the Nation*? Feel like there's something the rest of the Cree Nation should know?

Well that's what *the Nation* is here for. Call us at 514-272-3077, and we'll look into your story. If you don't call us, your voice won't be heard!

Happy birthday

to my favourite aunt Bella Mianscum on March 20 and my bro' Donny Nicholls on March 27.

From, Will Nicholls.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

COTA
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ASSOCIATION CRIE DE POURVOIRIE ET DE TOURISME

The Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA) is presently seeking applicants for the following positions:

- **Administrative Assistant**
- **Marketing & Communications Officer**
- **Product Development Officer**

Deadline for applications is March 28, 2008.

For further information, contact us at 1.888.268.2682 or by email at admin@creetourism.ca.

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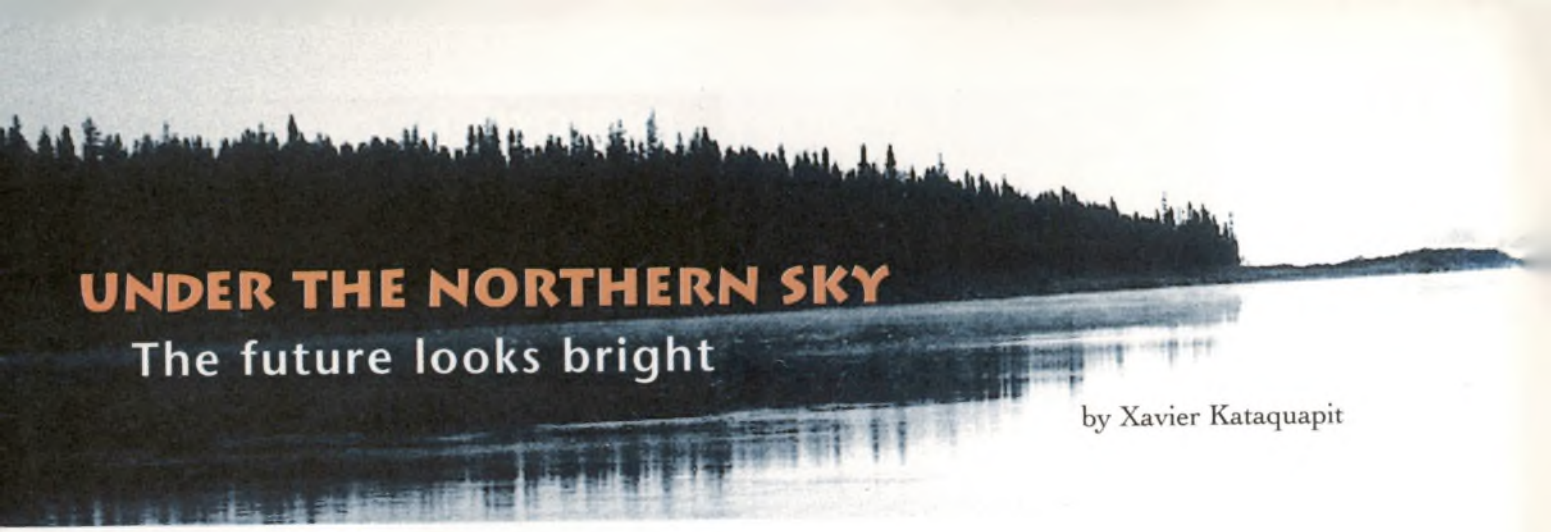

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

The future looks bright

by Xavier Kataquapit

During the day, whenever I can, I take the time to open the blinds and let the sun shine in while I sit at the table to have my breakfast or lunch. The sunlight lifts my spirits after weathering sunless days and gloomy storms. It also keeps me warm without the need to sit beside a furnace vent or a fire.

Even in the dead of winter at the coldest time of the year, the sun is still powerful enough to give us a good dose of light and warmth. In this day and age, most of us take the sun for granted. It just happens every day. There is a day and a night and that is how it has always been, more so that is how it will always be. For many of us, as we sit inside our homes in the winter watching television or glued to the computer, day and night has less meaning. We have electrical power now and we can recreate a little bit of the day during the night and we can hide in our dark corners to sleep during the day.

Many ancient civilizations have one thing in common when it comes to religion and spirituality and that is the realization that the sun plays an important role in our lives. Just about every major religion from early civilization worshiped the sun in one form or another. In traditional North American Native cultures, the sun plays a key part in our spirituality. Many traditional First Nation people are reviving the Sundance ceremony, a significant cultural event that was outlawed by the government for many years. There are many variations to this ceremony but the common symbolism lies in the fact that the event is held during the summer solstice when the sun is at its height during the middle of the year. In the past, life revolved around the sun. The sun provided warmth, safety, security in light and helped our plants to grow so we could eat and feed livestock.

Scientifically, when you are looking at an object like the sun from space, it would be like looking at a central power plant with a series of tiny balls revolving around it. This power plant throws energy in all directions yet we on planet earth receive only a mere fraction of it. This small amount of energy was enough to start and then sustain life on our little planet. It is estimated that on the surface of Earth, when the sun is at its height in the sky on a clear day, the energy received equals 1,000 watts per directly exposed square meter. On top of that, the sun's energy in heating and cooling down the surface of our planet is what causes the movement of the ocean's waters and wind. That is a lot of energy.

Strangely enough we are living in a time where you would think we would have more respect for the sun. However we are going to war to grab oil reserves and sources all over the world. We are in crisis mode with our worry about running out of energy. We are holding on to basic technologies that burn fossil fuels in order to create enough energy for our needs and to move our vehicles and power our factories and warm our buildings. We are scrambling for the next big breakthrough to find energy, while the sun radiates down an endless supply of potential power.

The main argument against harnessing solar energy is the high cost that is involved. However, with the increasing cost of fuel all over the world it is starting to become apparent that we should search for other sources of energy. If we really got serious and funded much more research into solar energy development I am sure we would produce new technologies that would be more efficient and we could make use of the sun's power even here in the north.

For those of us who live on remote First Nations the cost of food and fuel is already astronomically high, the possibility of alternative sources of energy seems reasonable. Today I am paying the same price for gas in northeastern Ontario as I did in Attawapiskat 10 years ago.

With the cost of fuel skyrocketing perhaps it is time to really invest in alternative sources of energy. The sun may not shine so brightly in the north for a good part of the year but combined with other alternative sources of energy like wind turbines we could realize new developments that wean us off of our addiction to fossil fuels.

My people survived for thousands of years by following the rhythm of the sun. I think that we will all have to revert back to our old traditions and we will be following our early sun-worshipping ancestors once again. The future looks bright for alternative energy.

CONSTRUCTION TAWICH

POSITION: Road Maintenance Supervisor (LG-3)

OPEN FROM: February 27, 2008 –March 19, 2008

HRS/WEEK: 65 Hours per week

SHIFTS: 30-day period with 10 days off

SALARY: Subject to experience

PLACE OF WORK: Wemindji, QC (LG-3 Garage)

STARTING DATE: April 16, 2008 (on Site)

Job Summary

The job requires an experienced and qualified individual who is able to supervise and operate heavy equipment. Individual will be required to maintain 202 kilometers of gravel road. The road maintenance work consists mainly of road grading, road repairs, water control, snow plow operations and gravel hauling.
The Trans-Tiaga route is contracted to Tawich Construction Inc. and is administered by the Société de Développement de la Baie James with an operation office situated in Radisson.

Specific requirements and qualifications:

- Minimum five (5) years road maintenance supervisory and heavy equipment operations experience,
- Must hold a valid class 1 Quebec drivers license and heavy equipment operator's certificate issued by a recognized institution or a CCQ permit; to operate a grader, excavator back hoe, loader, bulldozer, and 10 wheel dump trucks,
- Must have knowledge in the operation of small machinery, i.e. hot water steamer, water pumps, welding machine and compressor,
- Must have knowledge to perform equipment maintenance, service and repairs.
- Must have the ability to give instructions to the road crew and execute same as directed by company personnel and SDBJ road inspectors,
- Ability to effectively supervise daily work tasks, execute work assignments, successfully and productively,
- Must be able to submit written daily reports on equipment maintenance operation-hours, weather reports, road conditions, workers timesheets, on a weekly basis and submit to the company head office in Wemindji,
- Must have good oral and written communications skills in the English language,
- Knowledge of Cree and French would be an asset,
- Must be able to use office equipment, and computer knowledge would be an asset,
- Must be able to make good judgment decisions in urgent and emergency situations,
- Must supervise employees,
- Must be able to initiate and motivate teamwork with co-workers,
- Must exercise and insure safety in the workplace at all times,
- Must comply and execute SDBJ contract specifications and regulations as stipulated in the contract.

Priority will be given to Cree Beneficiary applicants.

Persons interested in this position are requested to send in their resume, with at least three (3) references and supporting operator's certification documents
by **March 19th, 2008 at 5:00 pm** to the attention of:

Chief Operating Officer
Tawich Construction Inc.
16 Beaver Road, Box 209
Wemindji, Quebec J0M 1L0

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAYS

Nevaeh Precious Angel Ottereys will be turning 2 on March 23, 2008. Wishing you all the best on your special day, sweetie. Hope your brothers don't bug you too much, eh? Have fun and we'll try to let you open your own presents, ok? We love you...From: Mom, Dad & ur brothers Elliot & Ethan.

Happy birthday to my little brother, Dante Immanuel Nine O'clock on March 2, 2008, where he'll be turning six. Jabweh, I love you bro. Happy Birthday to Audrey Petawabano on March 16. She'll be turning 3 and already mature enough. Jabweh, love you babes. Be a good girl, which you are. Love you with all my heart: from Heather [Stinkybear].

Happy birthday to my one and only Papabear [Tony Petawabano] on March 30. Happy birthday Papabear. Thanks for always being there for me and take care. Thanx for all your love that you gave me. I love you with all my heart. Love always, Heatherbeans [Stinkybear]. P.S. Not sharing my Papabear. He's mine, get your own hehe haha. Well you'll always be my Papabear. No matter what there's no Papabear like you.

Happy birthday going out to "Papa bear or Papa bah," Tony Petawabano. I love you. We thank you for everything you've given us!¢_ You told us never to give up & we thank god for you!!! ¢_. Love Suzanne N.¢_ (Mistissini).

We would like to say happy birthday to our little boy, Ali Gull on March 28, 2008. We hope you enjoy your special day. We wish you the best wishes on your birthday with your brother and sisters. We want to let the whole world know how much you mean to us and how smart you are. With lots of kisses and hugs from: Mommy, Daddy, Journey, Josie-Ann, Jacey-Leigh, Baby.

Happy 17th Birthday to my son, Trevor L. Moar, celebrating his special day on Nov. 21/07. My son you brighten up my life with memories and dreams. It seems like only yesterday you'd say I love you mom and wrap your arms around my neck and seal it with a kiss. My little boy you have grown into a wonderful young man you truly are a blessing of who I am so proud. I am so grateful to have a son like you and I love you very much. Love Mom (Wask.)

Happy Birthday to Elijah J. Matoush on March 7, 2008. Wow, how time flies by. Just 17 years ago I held you in my arms thanking God for your safe arrival. Once again, Happy Birthday and many more to come. We love you and miss you so much. Love mom and dad @ 80 Pine St.

To Gookum Della! Just wanted to wish you a happy birthday on March 9th. I love you and many more to come! xoxox Ur Great-grand child Devon (Waswanipi).

Happy birthday to my daddy, Alfred Paul Nine O'clock on February 25, 2008. Happy birthday daddy and thanks for everything you've done for me. Can't live without you. You're my #1 hero and no one will ever replace you. I would never ask for another dad just like you<3 Happy birthday daddy, enjoy your day and there could be no one like you and most of all I love being your daughter and nothing can change that. All I want to say is I love you with all my heart and thank you for surviving me as a father. You're the world's greatest dad and do I have to pay you back for all the work you've done for me lol... I guess not. Well happy birthday dad, take care. Love always, your annoying daughter Heather Maggie Nine O'clock. P.S. I love being a Nine O'clock.

Happy birthday to my most important and beautiful Aunt Valerie Nine O'clock. All I want to say is you rock at being my aunt and nothing is taking that away girlfriend<3 Love always your niece Heather Beanz Nine O'clock<3.

We would like to wish a Happy belated Birthday to Colin Shanush from Eastmain who celebrated his birthday February 26th. From everyone at the Wellness Centre. Hope you enjoy your day!! =)

I would like to wish a Happy belated 3rd Birthday to my little cousin Kenzie House from Chisasibi on February 22. I can't wait to see you again!! From your very tall cousin Beeta! (Valentina)

Birthday greeting going out to our dad Alfred Nine O'clock on Feb/25, but most of all our hero! Daddy you've been there for us. We could write a million chapters of how much we thank God he chose you to be our Daddy & still wouldn't be half of how much we love you so much!! We love you dad so, so much!&#9829. Another birthday wish going out to our aunt/best friend Valerie Nine O'clock on Feb/28. You've been there through our ups & downs! We love you! Say hi to the girls for me!&#9829. Happy 6th birthday to Dante Immanuel Nine O'clock on March 2. You mean the world to me. May your day be special as you are&#9829. Love forever & always, Suzanne, Heather, Dante & Shannon&#9829. We're sending a million kisses your way! ♥♥♥

I just want to wish a belated Birthday to my wonderful Dad James Stewart. Happy 70th Birthday!! With much love Tina, Jeremy, Alex & Katie xxxoooxxx.

CONGRATULATIONS

We would like to congratulate Jonathan Cheezo and Andrea Mamianskum on their engagement. Wishing both of you wonderful years together. From everyone at the Wellness Centre.

EASTER WISHES

Wishing everyone at the Wellness Centre in Eastmain a HAPPY EASTER. Hope everyone enjoys their weekend.

IN MEMORIUM

In memory of my friend, Katherine M. Ottereyes, who passed away March 20, 2007. After one year I still shed tears when I think of you or a smile will come to my lips thinking of the funny things you used to say or do. You were a caring and funny person. You went out of your way to help others. It was hard seeing you go. But you are free from pain, for that I am grateful. I will always remember you Katherine. I will always treasure your friendship. Mary.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

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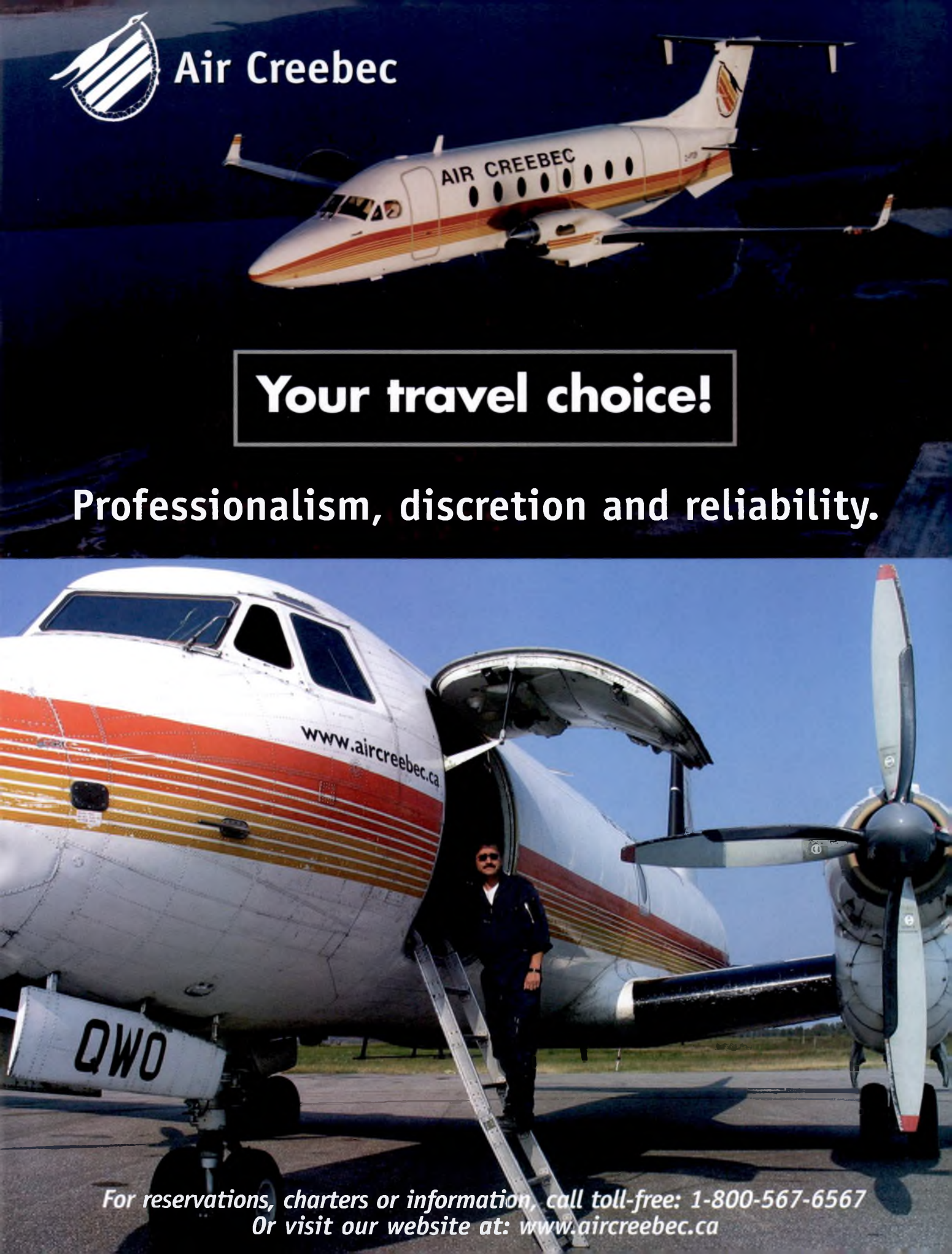
Congratulations to the Cree Nation on the Signing of the Canada-Cree New Relationship Agreement.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March 3-4-5 Wemindji • March 17-18-19 Mistissini • March 25-26-27 Ouje-Bougoumou
April 14-15-16 Nemaska • April 21-22-23 Waswanipi • May 20-21-22 Waskaganish
June 2-3-4 Eastmain • June 5-6-7 Whapmagoostui • June 9-10-11 Chisasibi

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Quotes from the parents at last year's workshop.

Rev. Mervin Cheechoo and his wife Carol Anne are originally from Moose Factory, Ontario. They have been blessed with three children: Jonathan, Kari and Jordan. Parenting their three children has been and continues to be a priority in their lives. Mervin and Carol Anne strongly believe that our communities will become strong and healthy as our families grow stronger and healthier.

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the Cree School Board